

## **HOPE VI Community & Supportive Services Best Practices - Community Engagement Atlantic City Housing Authority**

### **HOPE VI mixed-income community flourishes by establishing a Garden Club**

The Atlantic City Housing Authority (ACHA) turned a potential resident challenge into a growth opportunity through the ACHA Garden Club. In April 2008, the ACHA anticipated a new lease addendum that would make HOPE VI residents responsible for maintaining their own lawn and yard. While the ACHA recognized the need for HOPE VI developments to seamlessly blend into the surrounding communities, it also recognized residents' limited experienced with lawn care, evident though the uncut lawns that generated complaints from nearby residents and citations from city code enforcement. As a solution, the ACHA formed a Garden Club to not only create interest in gardening, but also to promote self sufficiency, a key HOPE VI goal.

By attending Garden Club meetings, residents were able to accumulate points to purchase yard equipment, lawn mowers, plants, flowers and other garden related items. All of the Garden Club meetings were facilitated by the HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services (CSS) coordinator, who took Garden Club members to Home Depot and a local garden center to make their point purchases. HOPE VI provided materials for the workshops and refreshments. Additional free workshops were offered through Rutgers University's Atlantic County Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners Program.

As a result of the Garden Club, residents took a greater level of pride in their homes and were enthusiastic about maintaining their property. Nearly all of the residents met the new yard maintenance requirements. Residents showed pride and enthusiasm for their gardens, and promoted community livability though mowing and watering their lawns, planting flowers and taking pride in their property. Additionally, ACHA was able to save over \$10,000 it would have spent cutting resident lawns. ACHA residents are looking forward to participating in the Garden Club again this spring.

### **For more information on this Best Practice contact:**

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